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PRESS RELEASE

New financial products and services in Corporate Financing

On September 24, 2008 the USAID Competitiveness project organized the "Innovative Services in Corporate Financing" Conference. Leading Banks and Investment Funds from Macedonia and the region, (including NLB Tutunska Banka, NLB Leasing, Stater Banka, SEAF Macedonia, Global Finance Bulgaria) presented new financial products and services in corporate financing to more than 50 companies attending the Conference.

"Having access to a wide range of financial products makes the difference between survival and failure for a great number of Macedonian companies. And for those that are competitive, acquiring financing may make the difference between expanding into international markets and generating new jobs and exports, or missing the opportunity altogether". – said Marcia Wong, USAID Economic Growth Office Director.

"The economic development of each country is based on local companies using different financing models to expand business operations. Leasing is a new financial product in the Macedonian market that is a globally recognized financing product which can be adjusted to any type of business. The flexibility of leasing and various financing models enable optimal solutions that are just now being recognized in the Macedonian market" - said Maja Lape, NLB Leasing.

At the conference, local consulting company Point- Pro, hired by the Competitiveness Project, presented the gaps and constraints in the financial market using case studies of Macedonian Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) companies.

The Competitiveness Project presented the Financial Platform, a set of interventions structured to provide assistance to companies in assessing capital needs for business growth and developing practical strategies to access commercial credit, equity finance, and new, innovative financial products being introduced in Macedonia.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.